

From Retail to Restaurant, Lyndee and Adam Simoneaux Have a Recipe for Success

Lyndee and Adam Simoneaux, the wife-and-husband owners of the Sippin' Cow Café, never really marketed their small coffee and sandwich shop.

They didn't need to.

In April 2001, the newspaper that had covered the business's windows was torn down. Sippin' Cow Café, located in historic downtown Bluffton, was officially open for business. With the first week free of charge to all customers as their only promotion (unadvertised, of course), Lyndee and Adam's coffee and sandwich shop quickly became a local hotspot.

"A lot of the local people just really support us," Lyndee says.

And the local people have spread the word to their visiting friends and relatives throughout the region. Joining them are Hilton Head Island residents and tourists who regularly cross the bridge into Bluffton and visit the Sippin' Cow Café.

The August 2004 issue of *Southern Living Magazine* instructed its readers to "start at the Sippin' Cow Café" when visiting Bluffton. Soon, Lyndee and Adam were serving customers from as far away as Maine and Nebraska.

"The *Southern Living* article really helped," Lyndee says. "We have people come from all over."

Lyndee and Adam did not begin their careers in the food industry. Before opening the Sippin' Cow Café, Adam had never even worked in a restaurant and Lyndee's experience was limited to waiting tables in college. But they had dreamed of opening their own business together since they began dating ten years ago. After Adam had worked for his father and run a video store and Lyndee had worked in sales for a paper chemical plant, they decided to finally quit working for others and start working for themselves.

In preparation for opening a coffee and sandwich shop, Lyndee visited various delis, speaking with their owners to find out market prices and the most popular foods. She and Adam decided to use recipes from *Southern Living Magazine* as well as from friends and relatives. They chose a coffee company based out of Charleston to be their primary supplier. Adam had known its owner while growing up, which quickly helped to establish a good working relationship. The owner of the coffee company taught Lyndee and Adam all about coffee and espresso and how to make specialty beverages like cappuccinos and iced lattes.

Other than that training and their borrowed recipes, however, "We really just winged it," Lyndee says.

After five years of enthusiastic response to their trial-and-error approach, Adam is constantly making up new specials while he prepares food in the kitchen, which are always well-received.

Of course, Lyndee and Adam didn't "wing it" with their business plan. They worked with business consultant Pat Cameron of the Small Business Development Center in Hilton Head, first meeting with her in January 2001. With Pat's help, Lyndee and Adam successfully secured a loan from Palmetto State Bank for the Sippin' Cow Café's start-up costs and for working capital.

"She (Pat) was just wonderful," Lyndee says. "If it wasn't for her, I don't know if we could have gone into business."

Lyndee and Adam exceeded their initial sales projection for their first year in business with the Sippin' Cow Café and sales have continued to increase each year.

Through the Sippin' Cow Café, Lyndee and Adam are able to contribute to the community. They frequently provide sandwich platters to local sports teams, the fire department and the police department. They also donate gift certificates and t-shirts to community fundraisers.

Owning a small business is "a lot more work," Lyndee says. She and Adam didn't take a vacation for almost four years after opening the Sippin' Cow Café and couldn't have much of a social life.

But, "You don't have anyone telling you what to do," she says. And now that they have become so successful – and have hired a staff of four employees – she and Adam have the freedom to take days off or to close the shop for a couple hours to take advantage of good surfing conditions if business at Sippin' Cow Café is slow. And with Lyndee and Adam expecting their first child soon, Lyndee has been able to take a much-needed break.

Owning a small business "takes a lot of hard work, a lot of dedication," Lyndee says. "You really have to like what you're doing."

Which, of course, Lyndee and Adam do. And their own hard work and dedication has turned their small business into a success story.

Sippin' Cow Café
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Bluffton, SC 29910
Lyndee and Adam Simoneaux, *Owners*